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ABSTRACT

Four brief project reports present aspects of child care provided by voluntary societies in England: (1) A statistical survey describes the characteristics of young children (0-5 years) admitted to the care of voluntary societies and the factors associated with the early restoration of some children to their parents, and the lengthy stay in care of others. (2) A study of 2-year-olds in residential nurseries compared development of children who had spent most of their lives in residential care with working class children living at home. (3) Language development of residential nursery children (2-5 years) was examined using verbal and nonverbal tests to determine presence and degree of language retardation. (4) An observational study of residential nurseries attempted to assess the manner in which specific aspects of the children's environment affected their psychological development. Emphasis was placed on comparison of the speech and actions of staff in different types of nurseries. A short discussion follows each report and specifies outcomes and conclusions. (WY)

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Pre-school children in residential care: Report on work carried out up to December 1969

Source of Support: The unit is supported for five years from October 1967 by a grant from Dr. Barnardo's Society.

Direction: The unit is under the joint direction of Professor Jack Tizard and Dr. Barbara Tizard, Department of Child Development, Institute of Education, 57 Gordon Square, W.C.1.

Personnel: Work in this unit started in October 1967, when Dr. Barbara Tizard took up a part-time appointment as Research Officer. The following staff has also worked in the unit since that time; Mrs. Anne Joseph, B.A. (née Mercer) Assistant Research Officer, full-time since January 1968; Mrs. K. Culbard, secretary, part-time since December 1967; Mrs. E. Tregenza, B.A., clinical psychologist, who carried out a programme of psychological testing between April and September 1969; Oliver B. Cooperman, a medical student from Harvard University, who worked with us on a voluntary basis from October 1968 until June 1969.

Projects Undertaken

I. Statistical Survey

The main aim of this survey was to describe in broad terms the characteristics of young children admitted to the care of voluntary societies, and the factors associated with the early restoration of some children to their parents, and the lengthy stay in care of others. Information was collected from the files of the three largest voluntary societies in England which provide residential care for young children, that is Dr. Barnardo's, the Church of England Children's Society, and the National Children's Home, about all children under five years of age admitted to their care in 1962, 1963 and 1964. The movements of the children were followed until December 1967. A detailed report of the survey is in preparation. Some of the main findings are briefly described below.

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In a number of respects the characteristics of the children looked after by the three societies differ, and where the figures for Dr. Barnardo's children diverge markedly from the overall findings they are mentioned separately. It should be noted that children admitted specifically for adoption were not included in this survey.
Out of the 3,055 children under five admitted in this period 57% were boys and 27% were coloured (Dr. Barnardo's, 34%). The principal reason for admission was illegitimacy, recorded in 60% of cases (Dr. Barnardo's, 47%). The proportion of coloured children who were illegitimate was even larger, 75%, (Dr. Barnardo's, 68%). Other, much less frequent reasons for admission were, in descending order, desertion of a parent or breakup of a marriage, long term illness of a parent, and neglect or cruelty by a parent. Other reasons, such as the death of a parent, were reported very rarely. The main burden of the societies' work with young children is thus with the children of unsupported mothers, and of broken or unstable marriages, who have never had the experience of a secure home.
Almost half of all children admitted under five were below the age of six months (Dr. Barnardo's, 39%) and 91% of these babies were illegitimate (Dr. Barnardo's, 86%). The earlier the admission, the more likely that the child was admitted because of illegitimacy. From the age of two illegitimacy drops into second place as the reason for admission, the most frequent cause being now desertion of a parent, or breakdown of a marriage: but illegitimacy continues to be the second most frequent reason for admission until the age of five. (In Dr. Barnardo's it takes third or fourth place

after the age of two.)
On admission, 9% of the children were placed directly in a foster home, (Dr. Barnardo's, 4%) while the rest went into residential nurseries or branch homes. However, subsequently about a third of the children were fostered (Dr. Barnardo's 36%). The children most likely to be fostered were illegitimate children admitted below the age of six months, and proportionately many more girls were fostered than boys. An equal proportion of white and coloured children were fostered. The success rate of foster home placements was much higher than that achieved by the local authorities - only 13% of children had to be removed from their first foster home (Dr. Barnardo's, 7.5%), and only 10% of all children fostered were moved to a second or third foster home (Dr. Barnardo's, 6%).
At the end of five years 18% of all the children admitted in 1962 had been adopted (Dr. Barnardo's, 12%). It should be remembered that the survey did not include children admitted specifically for adoption. 95% of those adopted were adopted by their foster parents; in most cases the fostering had been arranged "with a view to adoption". Girls were much more likely to be adopted than boys, but this was true only of white children. Coloured girls were not more likely to be adopted than coloured boys: coloured children of both sexes were adopted proportionately much less often than white children.
At the end of three years 37% of all children had been restored to a relative, and at the end of five years this figure had risen to 46% (Dr. Barnardo's, 42%). However, only 34% of the illegitimate children had been restored after five years, and only 25% of the coloured illegitimate children. The earlier the illegitimate child was admitted, the less likely he was to be restored. But for those admitted for "other" reasons, early admissions were as likely to be restored as later admissions, and white and coloured children were equally likely to be restored.

Discussion

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from this survey is that certain groups of children are less likely to be adopted or restored than others, and these facts should be borne in mind when considering admission policy. Only one in three of the illegitimate children taken into residential care under the age of six months is likely to be restored, and if he is coloured and a boy he is not likely to be adopted or fostered. In view of this finding, should more emphasis be placed on helping the unmarried mother to keep her child with her, by providing day care and other services or in other instances by helping her to release the child at an early age for adoption? The large numbers of abandoned illegitimate coloured children, especially boys, growing up in residential care would seem to call for a reconsideration of the problems involved in placing coloured children for adoption.

II. A Study of two year olds in residential nurseries

In this study we turned from statistical data to focus on the development of the child in residential care. Great improvements have taken place in residential nurseries in the last fifteen years, notably increased staffing and the introduction of small mixed age "family groups", but research workers have not yet assessed the effect of these changes on the development of the children. The aim of the study was to assess certain aspects of the development of two year old children who had spent almost all

their short lives in residential care, and to compare this development and the experiences they had had with those of two year old children living at home in working class families in London. The enquiry was particularly directed towards language acquisition and emotional development, areas in which earlier research workers had described serious retardation or disturbance. The age of two was chosen as the earliest at which reliable assessments could be made: it is planned to reassess the children when they are four years old.

A detailed report of the study is to be published. The main findings will be briefly described.

The nursery group consisted of thirty children aged exactly two who had all been healthy full-term babies, admitted to care before the age of four months, and not subsequently moved or hospitalised. They were living in twenty two different nurseries belonging to the three societies. All but one of the children were illegitimate, and 50% of them were never visited by relatives. They were compared with thirty two year olds from working class families in Southwark and Camden who were living in rather poor material circumstances (more than half had no bathroom or garden, and a number were living in condemned housing) but in small intact families.

The nursery children were found to be on an average two months retarded in their level of language development, and less talkative than children living at home. They were also less friendly to strangers, more clinging to their nurses, and more demanding of affection. However, most of them showed a clear preference for one or two particular nurses, and they were not indiscriminate in their demands for affection. More nursery than home children sucked their thumbs, and fewer were toilet trained, but there was no evidence of any marked disturbance or behaviour abnormality in the nursery group. The methods of child upbringing used by mothers and nurses differed widely: mothers were more indulgent, and demanded less of the children, but punished them more severely.

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idence of both language retardation and of emotional immaturity was found in two ar old nursery children, although the gross disturbance described by earlier workers s not seen. Both aspects of retardation would appear to be related to the poor ntinuity of care provided for nursery children. 70% of working class children d never been away from their mothers for a day. But each of our nursery two year ds had been looked after by large numbers of people, on average 24, since admission. early the needs of staff for recreation and promotion mean that no child in sidential care can be looked after by one person only, but the method of deployment staff greatly exacerbates the inherent instability.

st nurseries use student nursery nurses, each of whom works only three days a week r a period of about three months with a group of children. Moreover in most cases, ter qualifying, the staff nurse, although now attached to her group for five days a ek, remains only one year. The consequence is that only the most senior staff, who not themselves look after the children, are stable features. In these circumstances e students and nurses, howeverconscientious, cannot get to know the children timately, cannot understand their earliest speech, or provide them with the stavility eeded to grow towards emotional independence. Moreover, it is questionable whether

many girls of seventeen to nineteen (the most usual age of both students and staff nurses) are sufficiently mature to meet the demands of a group of motherless children. Hence even at two the children's behaviour indicates an unsatisfied need for greater affection and intimacy, whilst their language retardation indicates that they are having insufficient verbal exchanges with adults.

To the instability resulting from a multiplicity of caretakers must be added the instability resulting from the practice of moving the child from a baby group to a "family" group at the end of the first year of life, and from a nursery to a branch home at an age varying from two to seven years. Both these practices should be carefully re-examined. By the age of one the child has already developed bonds of affection with the adults who care for him, and is usually wary of strangers. The older nursery child who is awaiting transfer often expresses considerable overt anxiety at the anticipated loss of everyone who is familiar.

III. Language development of Residential Nursery Children aged 2-5 years

In order to see whether the language retardation found in two year old nursery children persisted, it was decided to assess older pre-school children. All the healthy children aged two to five years in eleven residential nurseries, belonging to the three voluntary societies, were examined with verbal and non-verbal tests. Children with any form of handicap and those who had been born prematurely were excluded. Of the 85 children examined, 77% had been admitted to the nursery before their first birthday and only 14% had been admitted after their second birthday. Language development for most of the children had thus taken place in the nursery. On a non-verbal test the scores of the nursery children were average throughout the age range. The language retardation found previously in two year olds was seen to persist until about the age of two and a half. However, between the ages of three and a half and five years the average nursery child scored better on a test of language comprehension than did children of the same age living at home. Their ability to use language to express themselves remained rather below average, and the gap between their scores and that of children living at home tended to increase as they grew older.

Discussion

The below average scores of the younger children is probably a consequence of their relative neglect in many nurseries. (See next section.) However, this retardation was shown to be reversible. The above average scores on language comprehension of the older children must reflect the excellent environment which in many ways the residential nursery provides. The staff-child ratio is high, and the nursery children have better play equipment, more stories, often more outings, than many children living at home. However, the gap between their good language comprehension and below average ability to express themselves raises interesting problems. There is reason to believe that nursery children talk less than children living at home, and this may result from their lesser emotional involvement with the adults caring for them or the lesser responsiveness of those adults to their conversational overtures. Further study is needed to elucidate this question.

IV Observational Study of residential nurseries

Further studies have been carried out or are in progress which attempt to assess the manner in which specific aspects of the child's environment in the nurseries affect their psychological development.

The purpose of these investigations is to show whether differences in the speech and actions of the adults who care for children are reflected in differences in the children's achievement. Two comparisons are planned: on the one hand, a comparison of the speech and actions of nurses and working class mothers, and on the other hand a comparison of the speech and actions of staff in different types of nursery. The first study is in preparation: a brief report of the second study follows:

Factors affecting the level of language development within the nursery

Very large differences were found in the level of language development achieved by children in different nurseries. It was believed that these differences were not genetic, but related to aspects of the management of the nursery, and mediated by differences in the way in which the staff acted and talked to the children. The most important aspects were believed to be the following:

1. The autonomy of the nursery group: in some groups, which were physically independent in the sense that they were housed in a separate cottage or flat, the nurse in charge made all the day-to-day decisions in the life of the children and was consulted by the Child Care Officers about the child's future. The children in these groups were usually given almost the same degree of freedom as children living at home, that is they could move freely about the house and garden, take part in decisions about their new clothes and the day's menus, etc. At the other extreme the nurse had to refer most decisions throughout the day, e.g. whether to take the children for a walk or to switch on the television set, to the superintendent or matron, and the children were not allowed to go around the house or into the garden on their own. It was believed that in groups where the nurse's autonomy and responsibility was high her interactions with the children would be more frequent, whilst where her autonomy was low, and in a sense she was only "minding" the children under the eye of her superior, her interactions would be fewer and she would spend more time supervising only.

2. Staff ratio: whilst this was everywhere high by most standards in some nurseries it was considerably higher than others, and it was expected that in those groups the staff would interact more with the children.

3. Staff stability: In some nurseries the staffing was exceptionally unstable, because the day staff had to do periods of night duty. In these nurseries it was expected that the staff, because they knew the children less well, would interact less with the children.

4. Age range of the children: In some nurserygroups more than half of the children were under three, and because of the burden of physical care involved, and the limited speech of the children, it was expected that the staff in these groups would interact less with the children than in those groups where the average age was higher.

5. Years of experience. It was believed that nurses with considerable experience would interact with the children more than newly qualified nurses, because of their greater self-confidence and understanding of the children's needs.

It was therefore decided to observe in detail the activities and talk of the staff in thirteen residential nursery groups, chosen because they differed one from another in the aspects of management described above. Each group was observed over a five day period.

Time-sampling techniques were used to record the way in which the staff used their time and the conversational exchanges and other staff/child interactions which took place.

It was found that in those nurseries where the children's language development was highest the staff spent more time interacting with the children, i.e., playing with or chatting to them, rather than supervising their play, that a higher proportion of staff talk was informative rather than merely "time-passing comments", and that the staff more often answered the children. The frequency with which the staff spoke to the children (within the range observed) did not affect the level of language development: it was rather the <u>quality</u> of the talk which was important. The quality of the talk could also be seen to affect the number of verbal interchanges with the children. "Informative" remarks by the staff tended to evoke a response in the children, which commands and "time-passing" remarks did not. The greater the proportion of prohibitions in nurses talk, the less often was she answered by the children.

Further, those nurseries where the staff had greater autonomy, where there was a better staff stability, fewer very young children, and the staff were more experienced were indeed those where the children's language scores were highest and where the staff played and chatted more with the children, answered them more often, gave more explanations with their commands and fewer prohibitions. The superiority of the older nurses was very striking. They talked, chatted, and played with the children more than the younger ones, gave more explanations to them and used fewer negative sanctions. However, all the five aspects mentioned above appeared to affect both the children's langauge development and the staff's activity and talk, and it was not possible within the limits of the study to determine the relative importance of each factor. We were however able to establish that the level of language comprehension was related on the one hand to certain features of the nursery organisation and on the other hand to characteristics of the nurses activity and speech. No such relationships were found with the children's non-verbal scores. whereas in the ordinary family the toddler tends to be the centre of attention, in the residential nursery it was observed that children under the age of two and a half were spoken to less often than the older children. This observation helps to explain the relative retardation of the nursery two year old.

A finding of relevance to staff deployment was that when two staff were on duty with a group of six children the junior of the two tended to talk less and interact less with the children than when she was alone in charge of the group. A more efficient use of staff, then, is where possible to place each nurse in charge of three children.

Other aspects of residential nursery life. 1. "Emotional climate".

Although the main aim of the observational study was to investigate the processes associated with varying levels of language achievement, information was also collected on other aspects of nursery life. Some attempt to assess the "emotional climate" of the nursery was made by observing the frequency of staff remarks

expressing pleasure or displeasure, anger or affection, the frequency of affectionate exchanges between staff and child, and of episodes in play or conversation when staff and child gave each other total attention.

Until a comparable study is made in working class families it is difficult to make a complete assessment of our findings. However, there is no question but that all the exchanges described above were observed very rarely in the nursery, e.g. only 2% of staff talk expressed pleasure or affection, and only 1% of staff time was spent in affectionate physical exchanges with the children. The staff were almost always kindly, but their relationship with the children tended to be both detached and superficial. Further evidence of this was found during interview when compared with working class mothers nurses much less often said that they worried about their charges, or felt really cross with them, or were upset by them.

Discussion

It is of considerable interest that the nursery staff, almost all of whom are kindly and fond of children, tend to treat their charges in a detached way, very different from the way in which they will later look after their own children. It is suggested that the following factors are responsible:

1. The multiplicity of caretakers described above means that staff have usually not worked for a long period with any one child.
2. The nurses in charge of a group of six children tend to guard against favouritism by treating all the children in a detached way.
3. The organisation of the nursery into groups of six means that it is rare for one or two children to be alone with an adult.

4. The custom of sending children aged three and upwards to nursery school all day means that they spend even less time with their own nurse, and more time in a larger group. Moreover, the under-threes do not often benefit from this arrangement, since there is a tendency to "pool" the younger children from two groups when the older ones are away.

5. Both staff nurses and students tend to be very young, and may be absorbed with their own problems and future. Moreover, they areaware that their stay in the nursery is likely to be brief, often filling in time until they are old enough for other training. In these circumstances they probably protect themselves from deep involvement.

6. The children themselves are often in temporary care, and it is thought not worthwhile, or even wrong, to make a close relationship with them. Yet an emotional vacuum is probably damaging to the child, and may make it harder for him to reform a relationship with his mother later.

7. There is sometimes a lack of recognition at all levels that each child needs someone to care particularly and deeply about him. Staff may be discouraged from becoming too involved with children, a process that may indeed lead to problems. Junior staff are often encouraged to tidy up and get on with the nursery routine rather than spend time with an individual child. Some nurseries attempt to meet w this problem by a system of "special" nurses. Each student and staff nurse has one or two children whom she pays special attention to and takes out in her off-duty time. This system undoubtedly creates a close bond in many cases, but since the child and his "special" nurse are rarely in the same group the child has the constant frustration of seeing her care for someone else, and is moreover liable to suffer deeply when she leaves. Far more satisfactory would be the development of closer bonds with the staff

who care for the child, at least two of whom should take an interest in each child, so that he is not bereft when one leaves.

2. The child's self-direction

Observations were also made of the extent to which the children were encouraged to direct their own actions. The frequency with which they were offered a choice was noted, and also the frequency with which they were treated as a group, and their play was directed by the staff. Considerable variations between nurseries were noted, which were associated with the degree of autonomy of the staff. That is, in those nurseries where the staff nurses' autonomy was high the children were more often treated as individuals and more often took an active part in play with the staff. It was, however, unusual in any nursery for the child to be offered a choice, and it was very unusual for the staff to talk to the children about themselves or their families, or to discuss the children's past or their future with them.

Discussion

In so far as children are treated as a group, e.g. toiletted together at regular hours, moved "en bloc" round the house and garden when the staff wish, encouraged to watch, whilst the staff lead play activities and to accept what they are given without choice, they do not learn to take responsibility for their own actions or to direct their own lives. Although we have as yet no evidence for this assertion it seems likely that children brought up in this manner will tend to become passive and wait for direction. Yet it is these same children without a stable family background who will later be most in need of the capacity to direct their lives without guidance and supervision.

A major reason for the "bloc" treatment of the children is probably the inexperience of many of the staff, who fear that chaos might ensue if individuality were encouraged. However, there is often a lack of recognition by superintendents of the desirability of encouraging self-awareness and self-direction in the children. This is reflected in the low autonomy given to the nurses: those nurses who had to refer every decision to a superior ran their group entirely by routine and offered their charges very little choice.

Breadth of Experience

This aspect of nursery life was investigated by a questionnaire. Nurseries now make considerable efforts to broaden the experiences of their children, and we found that they provide as many, or more unusual experiences, e.g. visits to the zoo, seaside or circus, as working class families. Often they are read to, and sung to more than children at home. However, nursery children still have fewer, or none, of certain everyday experiences from which the child at home develops self-confidence in a variety of spheres. They do not usually help prepare meals, watch the behaviour of a group of adults, get into bed with an adult for a cuddle, run in and out of a neighbour's house, or pay regular visits to relations. Most of them have little if any close contact with men. Some of these deficiencies can be remedied in part by the use of the cottage system, where each group nurse does her own cooking and shopping, others by finding the children local "aunties" with whom they can spend weekends. The possibility of employing male Community Service Volunteers in nurseries would be worth exploring.

Conclusion

The residential nurseries run by the large British voluntary societies are probably as good as any in the world. Staffing, housing, and play equipment are generously provided, and in many respects, described above, the level of development of the children bears witness to this. However, in a number of respects the environment in most nurseries differs from that of a good working class home - notably in the multiplicity of caretakers, lack of emotional warmth, restriction of experiences, and the tendency to discourage spontaneity, and initiative in the child. We found that the nursery two year old shows signs of emotional immaturity which may be related to these characteristics: we have not yet examined their effect on older children. It should be noted that 64% of the children we observed had not been visited by a relative for at least a year (Dr Barnardo's 58%) and are therefore wholly dependent on the nursery staff for their emotional and other needs.

In our study of language development we showed that the achievement of the children was related to certain aspects of the management of the nursery which affected the way in which the staff interacted with the children. Some of these aspects, notably, good staff autonomy, experienced staff and stable staff, are probably also important for the development of good staff-child interactions in the widest sense. In the course of this report other suggestions for nursery organisation have been made, in particular that where possible groups of six children should be subdivided, that there should be a drastic reduction in the number of persons caring for each child, and that a deliberate structuredencouragement of closer staff-child intimacy should be considered. Each of these changes may bring its own problems, and further study of the development of the young child in residential care is planned.

It would be uncharitable and unjust to conclude this report without paying tribute to the high quality of the work already being done in the nurseries, and the devotion and concern of the staff involved. In all the nurseries we visited we were accorded every opportunity to carry out our studies, and staff at all levels discussed their problems freely and frankly with us. We are indeed grateful to them for their co-operation.